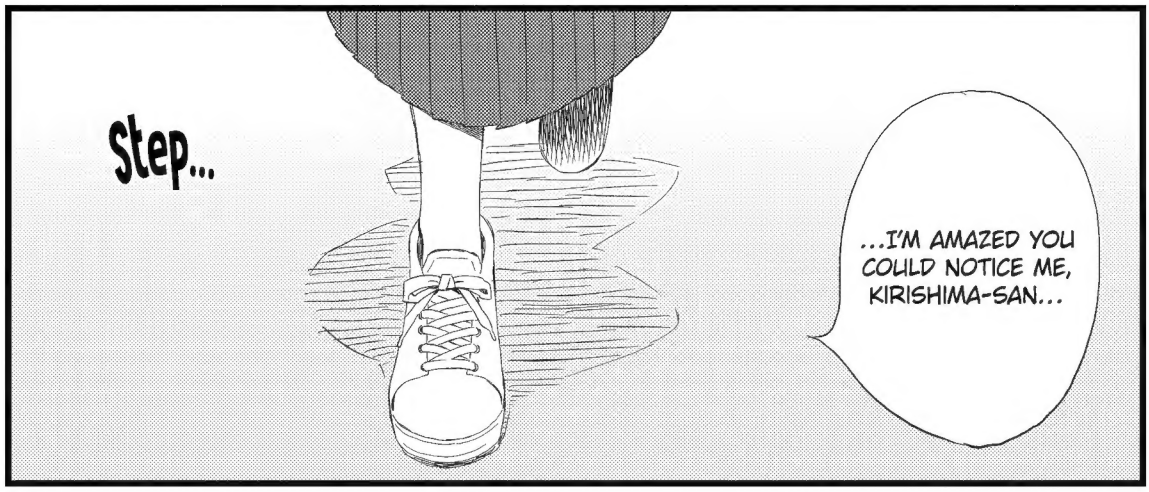
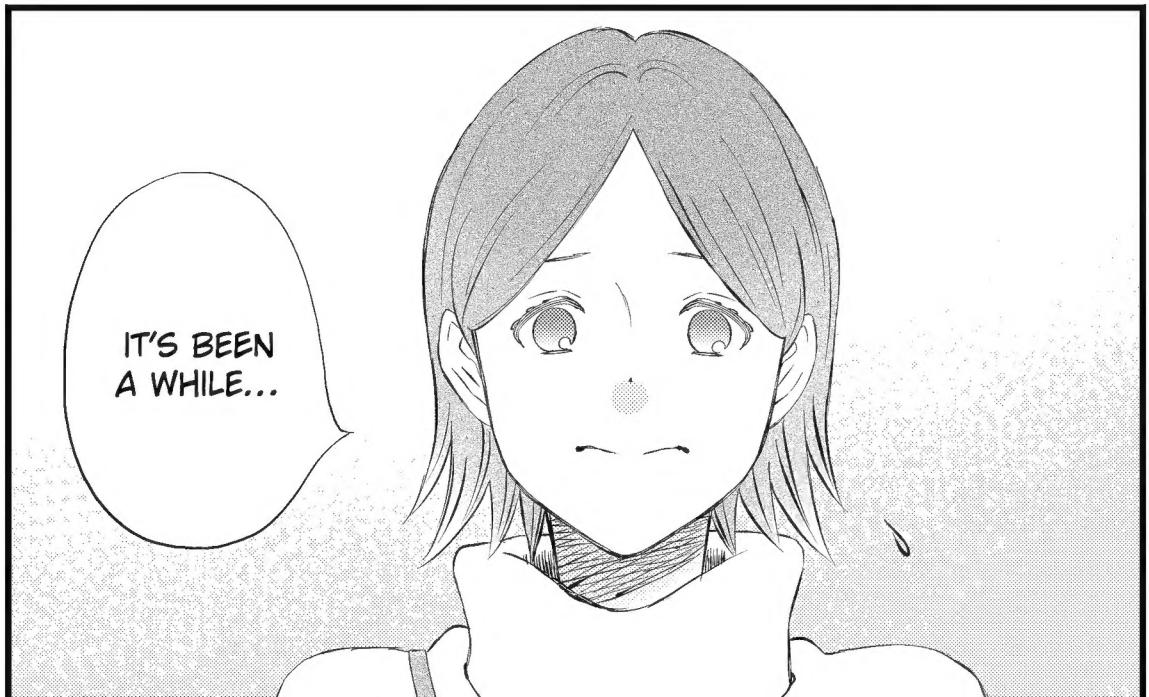
Chapter 73: Together With The Stalker





AFTER A LONG ABSENCE, THE STALKER KAMIYA-SAN MAKES AN APPEARANCE.

WHO'S THAT...?

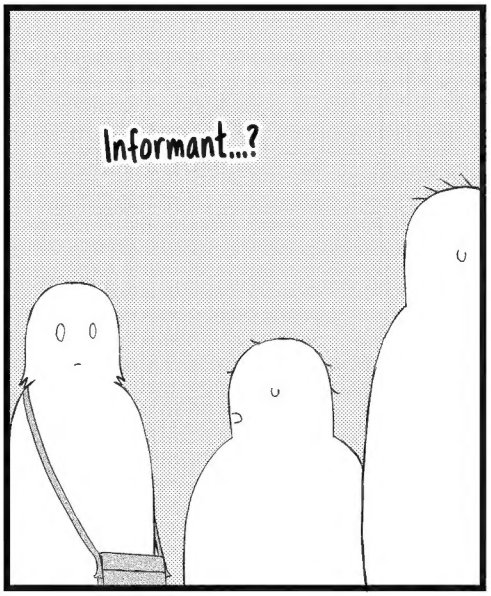
OR RATHER, WHAT'S HER DEAL...?

...YEAH, IT'S ALSO DIFFICULT FOR ME TO EXPLAIN WHAT HER DEAL IS...

I CAN'T JUST HONESTLY TELL HIM THAT SHE'S ISHIMURA-SAN'S STALKER.

...UHH, YOU SEE... HER NAME IS KAMIYA-SAN, AND...

UM...

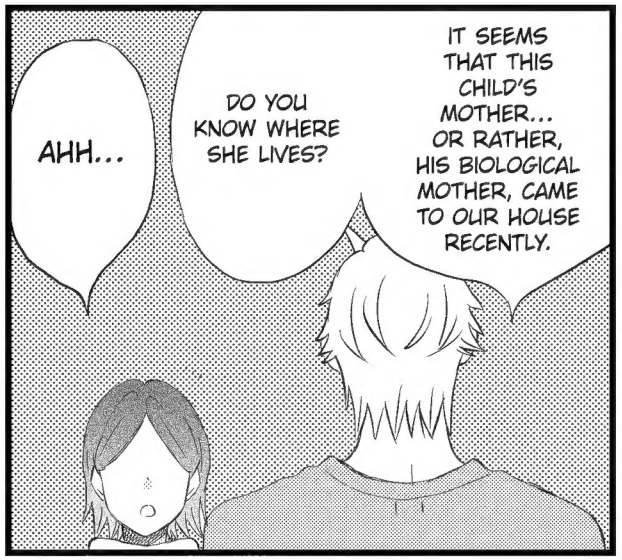


ANYWAY...

I KNOW IT'S SURPRISING, BUT PEOPLE LIKE HER DO EXIST...
YEAH... THOUGH YOU DON'T FIND OUT ABOUT THEM UNTIL YOU'RE AN ADULT...
WAIT, SOMEONE LIKE THAT REALLY EXISTS? IT SOUNDS LIKE SOMETHING OUT OF A FOREIGN CRIME DRAMA...

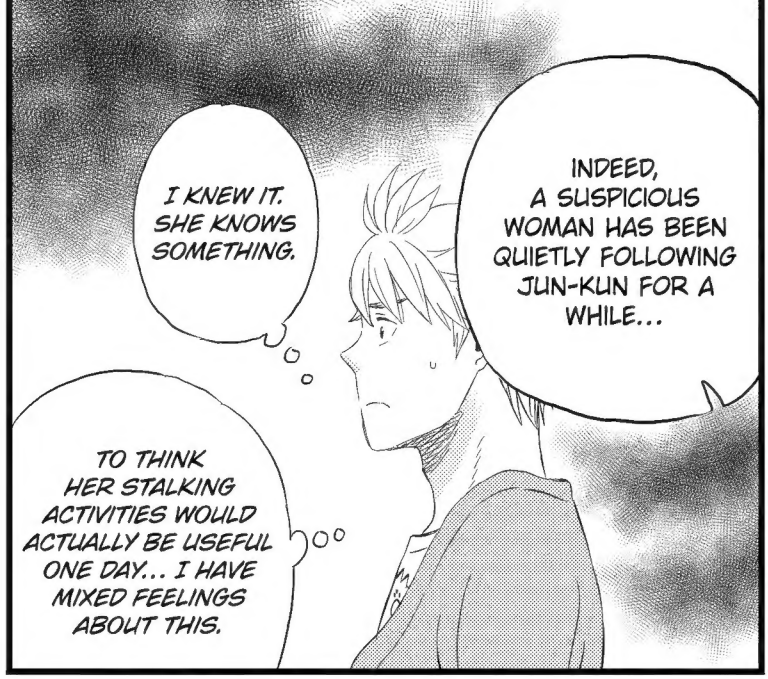
OHH...!
MIYAKE JUN-KUN... BUT RIGHT NOW, YOU GO BY KIRISHIMA JUN-KUN, CORRECT?
...I DO...

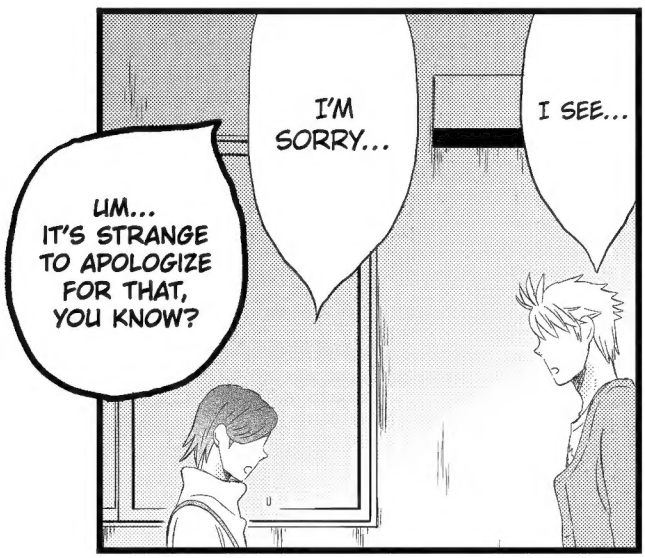
YOU KNOW ABOUT THIS CHILD'S BACKGROUND, DON'T YOU?
WE HAVEN'T SEEN EACH OTHER IN A VERY LONG TIME, BUT...

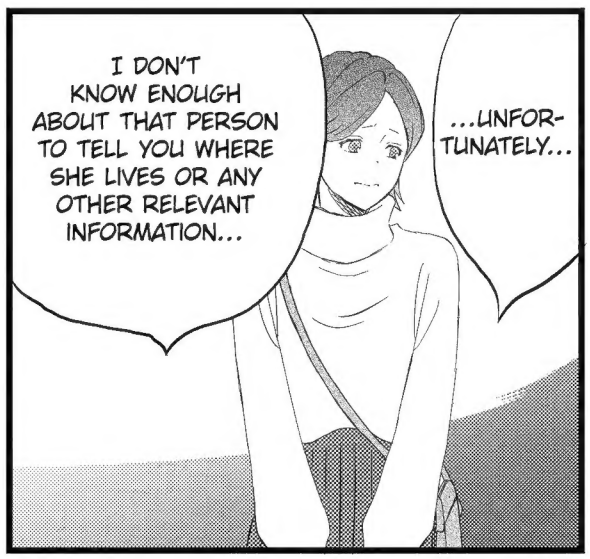

AHH...
DO YOU KNOW WHERE SHE LIVES?
IT SEEMS THAT THIS CHILD'S MOTHER... OR RATHER, HIS BIOLOGICAL MOTHER, CAME TO OUR HOUSE RECENTLY.

HM? YEAAAH... THEY SURE DO.
Ha ha ha...
AMAZING! INFORMANTS REALLY KNOW EVERYTHING!

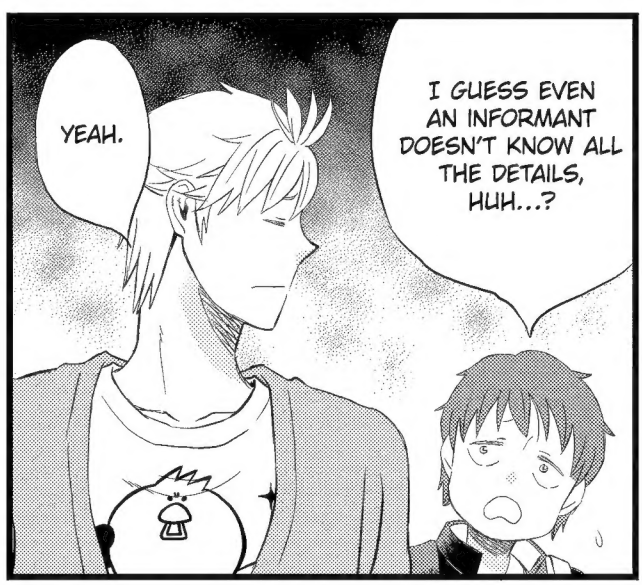
HOWEVER?
...HOWEVER.

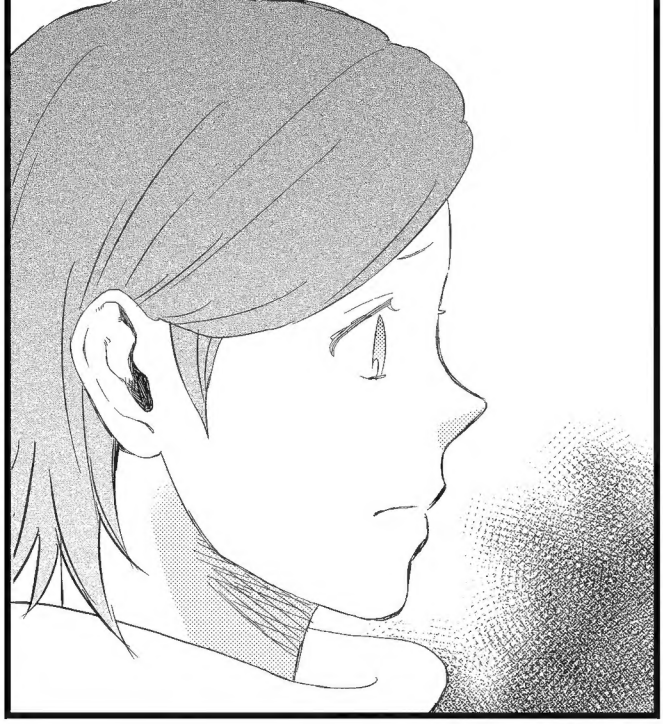

INDEED, A SUSPICIOUS WOMAN HAS BEEN QUIETLY FOLLOWING JUN-KUN FOR A WHILE...
I KNEW IT. SHE KNOWS SOMETHING.
TO THINK HER STALKING ACTIVITIES WOULD ACTUALLY BE USEFUL ONE DAY... I HAVE MIXED FEELINGS ABOUT THIS.

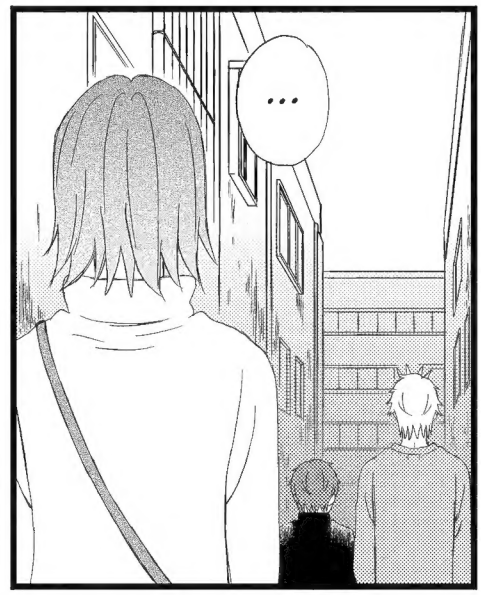

I SEE...
I'M SORRY...
UM... IT'S STRANGE TO APOLOGIZE FOR THAT, YOU KNOW?


...UNFORTUNATELY...
I DON'T KNOW ENOUGH ABOUT THAT PERSON TO TELL YOU WHERE SHE LIVES OR ANY OTHER RELEVANT INFORMATION...

Thank you very much...
No need to thank her for this!
Let's go!


I GUESS EVEN AN INFORMANT DOESN'T KNOW ALL THE DETAILS, HUH...?
YEAH.

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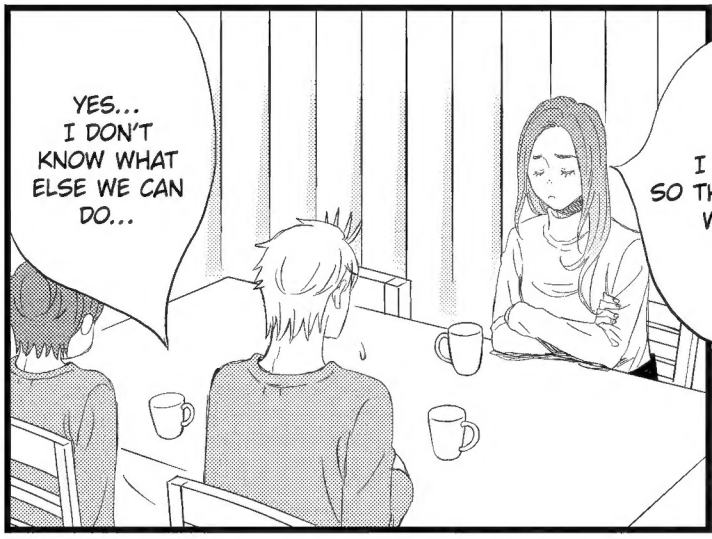
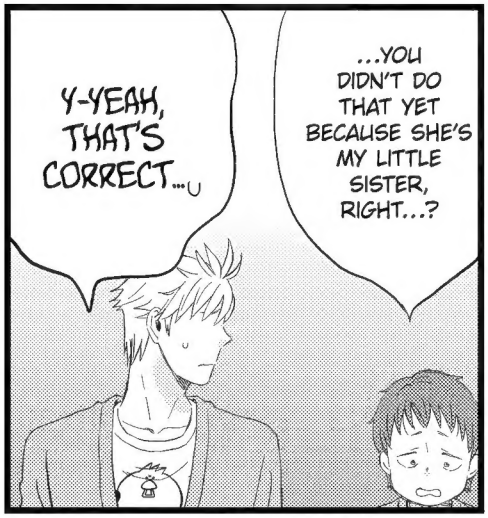
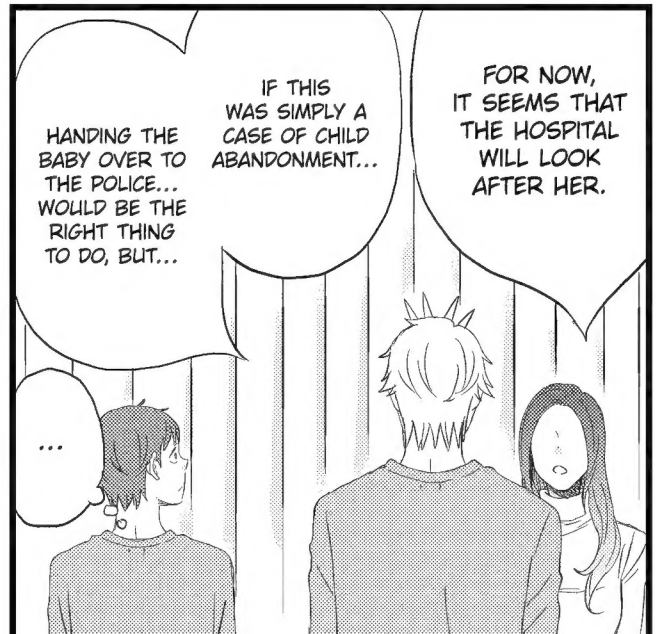
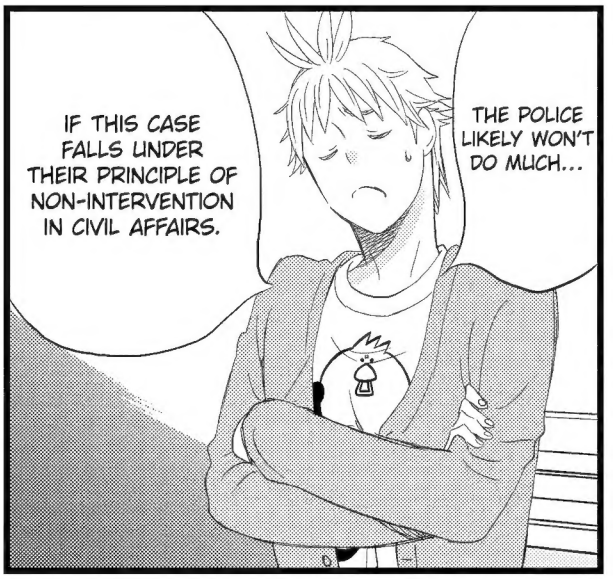

YES... I DON'T KNOW WHAT ELSE WE CAN DO...

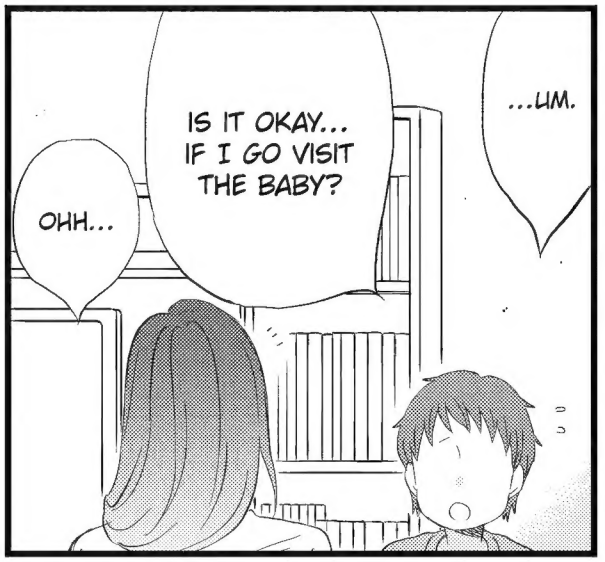
I SEE... SO THAT DIDN'T WORK.


Y-YEAH, THAT'S CORRECT...
...YOU DIDN'T DO THAT YET BECAUSE SHE'S MY LITTLE SISTER, RIGHT...?

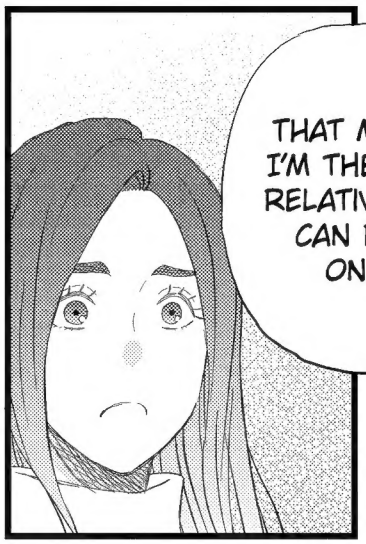

HANDING THE BABY OVER TO THE POLICE... WOULD BE THE RIGHT THING TO DO, BUT...
IF THIS WAS SIMPLY A CASE OF CHILD ABANDONMENT...
FOR NOW, IT SEEMS THAT THE HOSPITAL WILL LOOK AFTER HER.
...

ANYWAY, WE NEED TO HURRY UP AND FIND THE PERSON WHO ABANDONED THE BABY.


IF THIS CASE FALLS UNDER THEIR PRINCIPLE OF NON-INTERVENTION IN CIVIL AFFAIRS.
THE POLICE LIKELY WON'T DO MUCH...

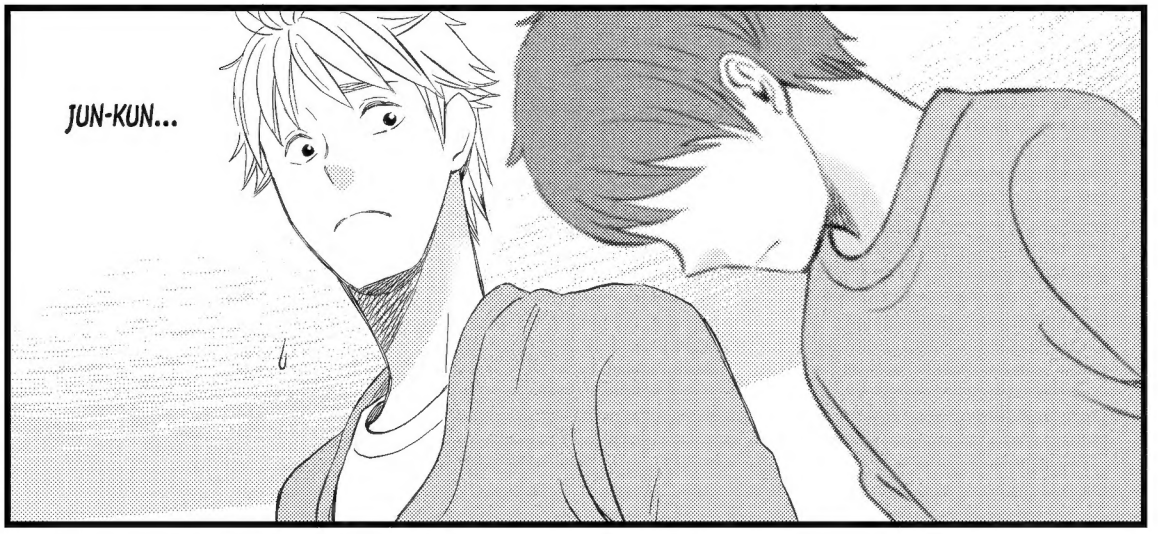

...UM.
IS IT OKAY... IF I GO VISIT THE BABY?
OHH...

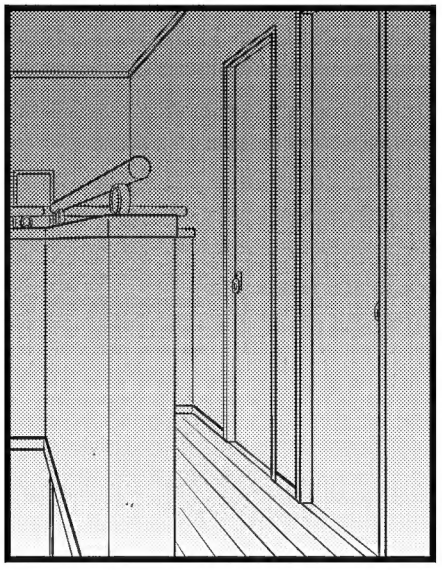
I'M COUNTING ON YOU.
I CAN GET AROUND DURING THE DAY, SO I'LL START SEARCHING THE NEIGHBORHOOD TOMORROW FOR HER AND FOR ANY POTENTIAL WITNESSES.

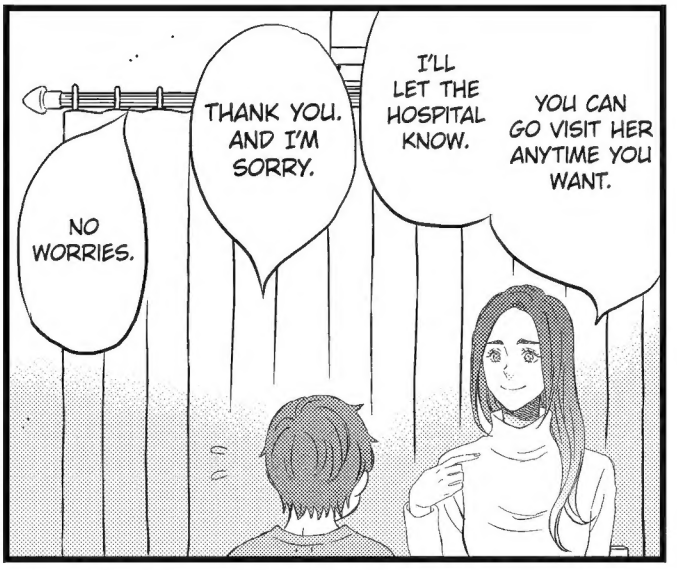

THAT MEANS I'M THE ONLY RELATIVE SHE CAN RELY ON...

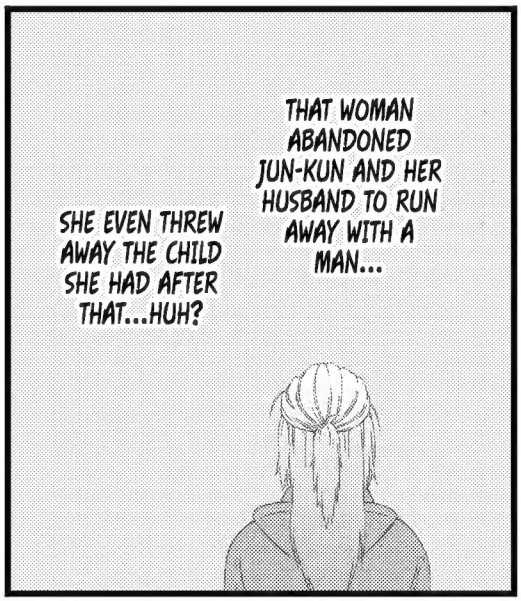
IF SHE'S REALLY MY SISTER... IF SHE, LIKE ME, WAS ABANDONED BY HER MOTHER...

SO I WANT HER TO FEEL THAT THERE'S AT LEAST SOMEONE IN HER FAMILY WHO CARES ABOUT HER...
RIGHT NOW, SHE'S SURROUNDED BY STRANGERS. I'M SURE SHE'S FEELING ANXIOUS AND LONELY.
SHE MAY NOT UNDERSTAND IT YET BECAUSE SHE'S SMALL, BUT...

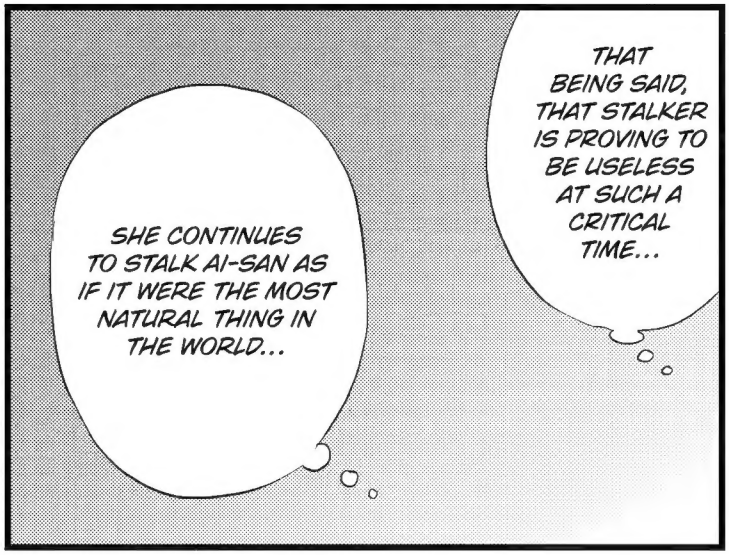

JUN-KUN...




NO WORRIES.
THANK YOU. AND I'M SORRY.
I'LL LET THE HOSPITAL KNOW.
YOU CAN GO VISIT HER ANYTIME YOU WANT.


THAT WOMAN ABANDONED JUN-KUN AND HER HUSBAND TO RUN AWAY WITH A MAN...
SHE EVEN THREW AWAY THE CHILD SHE HAD AFTER THAT...HUH?

I CAN'T DECIDE ON WHAT TO DO WITH THAT BABY...
...ANYWAY, UNTIL I MEET JUN-KUN'S MOTHER IN PERSON...

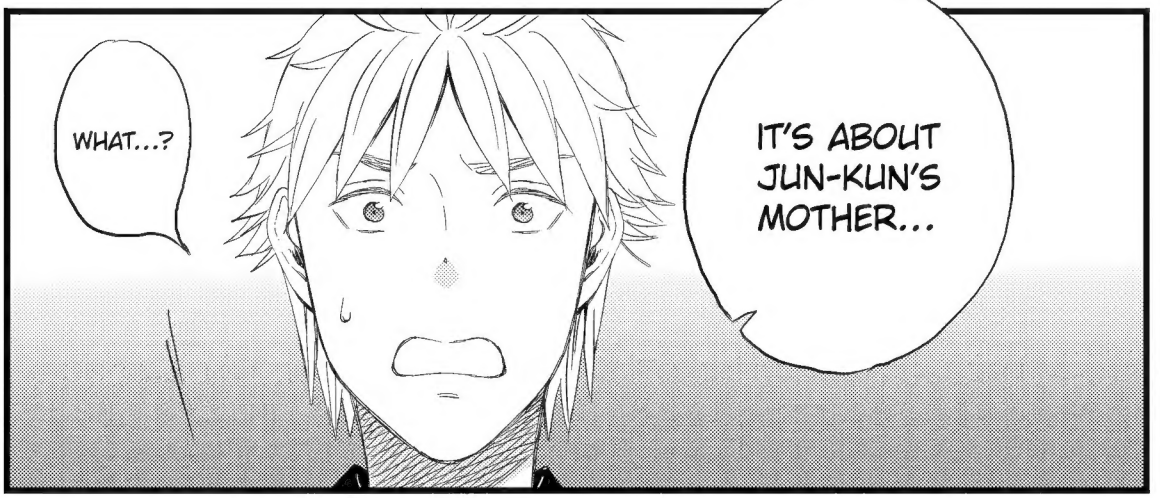

SHE CONTINUES TO STALK AI-SAN AS IF IT WERE THE MOST NATURAL THING IN THE WORLD...
THAT BEING SAID, THAT STALKER IS PROVING TO BE USELESS AT SUCH A CRITICAL TIME...

JUN-KUN SURE WAS BORN TO AN AMAZING MOTHER... THE POOR THING.

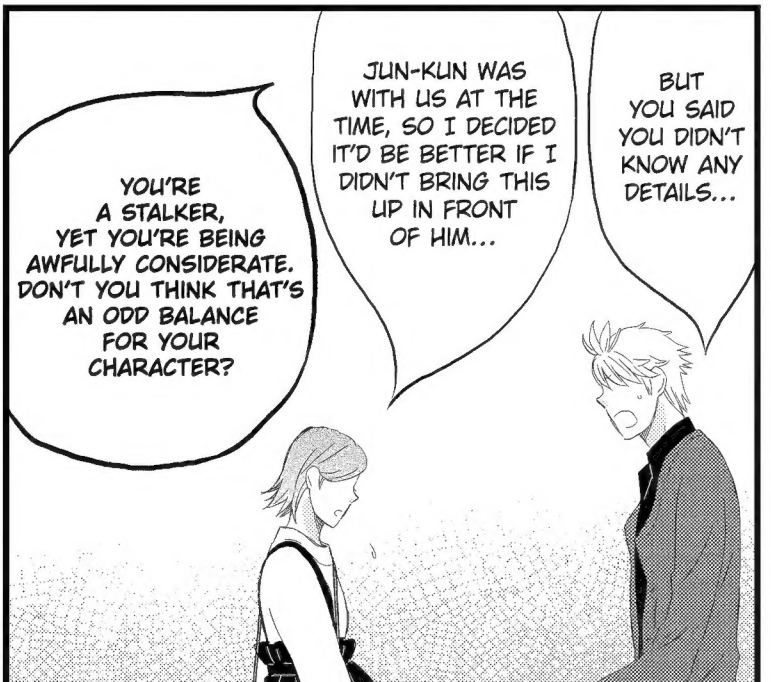
I HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO HAVE A TALK WITH HER AGAIN...

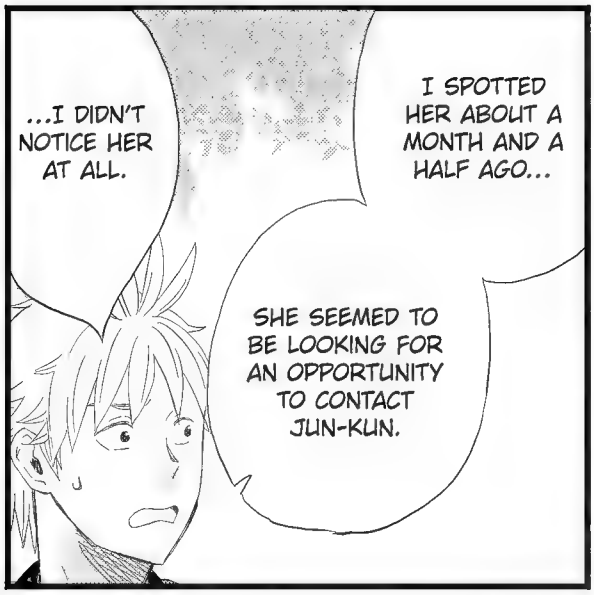
EVEN IF I THREATEN TO CALL THE POLICE, THAT STILL WON'T STOP HER...

BUT THERE'S SOMETHING I MUST DISCUSS WITH YOU, KIRISHIMA-SAN...
I'M SORRY...
WHAT A COINCIDENCE. ME TOO!

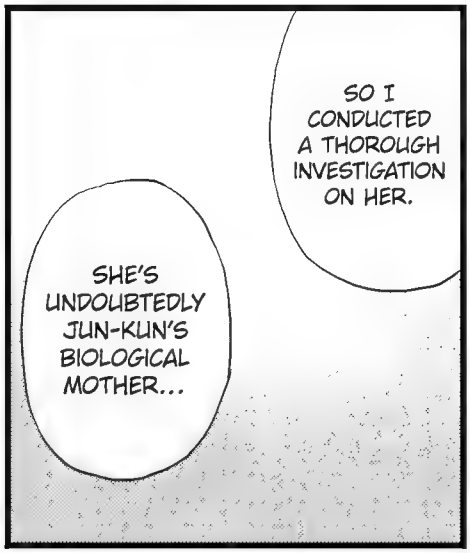

WHAT...?
IT'S ABOUT JUN-KUN'S MOTHER...

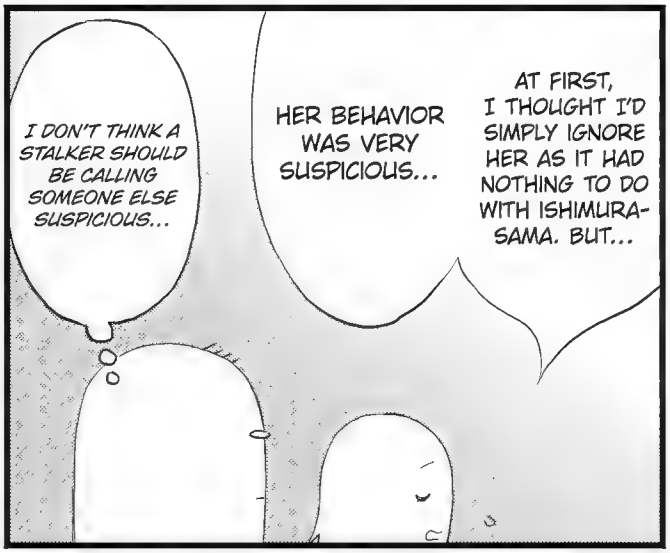
...ANYWAY, I WILL TELL YOU EVERYTHING I KNOW.


YOU'RE A STALKER, YET YOU'RE BEING AWFULLY CONSIDERATE. DON'T YOU THINK THAT'S AN ODD BALANCE FOR YOUR CHARACTER?
JUN-KUN WAS WITH US AT THE TIME, SO I DECIDED IT'D BE BETTER IF I DIDN'T BRING THIS UP IN FRONT OF HIM...
BUT YOU SAID YOU DIDN'T KNOW ANY DETAILS...


...I DIDN'T NOTICE HER AT ALL.
I SPOTTED HER ABOUT A MONTH AND A HALF AGO...
SHE SEEMED TO BE LOOKING FOR AN OPPORTUNITY TO CONTACT JUN-KUN.

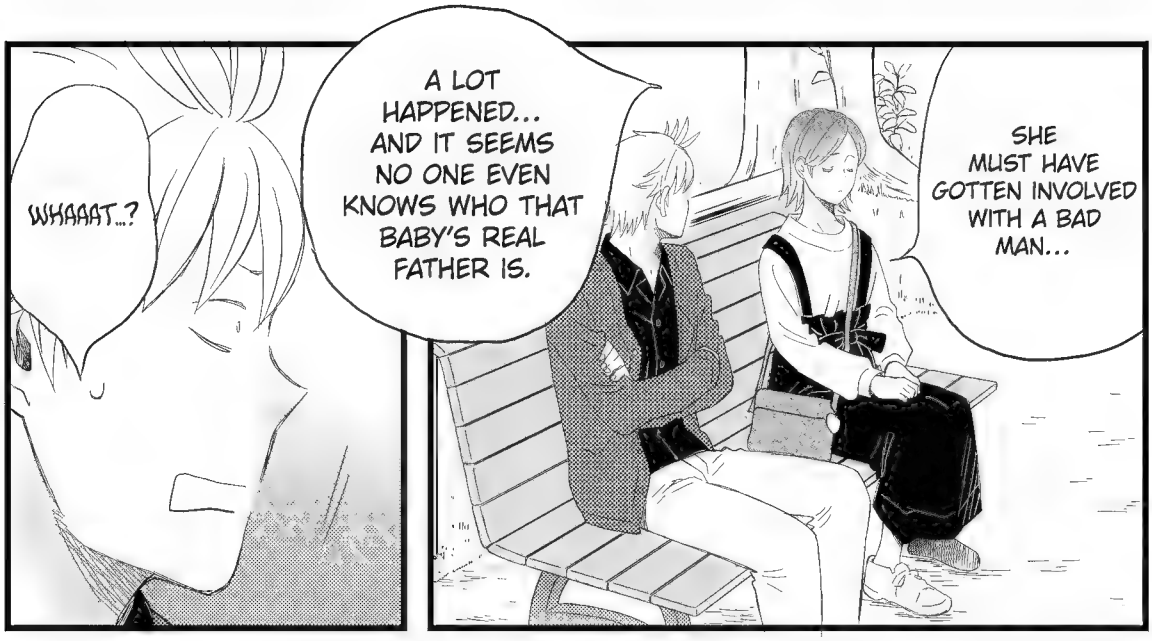
WHERE JUN-KUN'S MOTHER LIVES.
THE TRUTH IS, I KNOW...

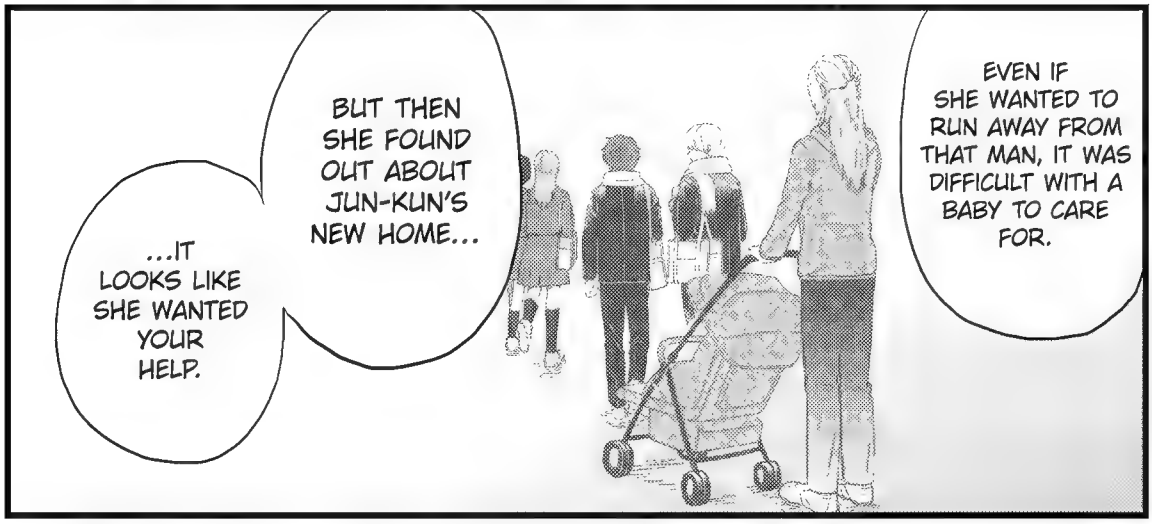

SO I CONDUCTED A THOROUGH INVESTIGATION ON HER.
SHE'S UNDOUBTEDLY JUN-KUN'S BIOLOGICAL MOTHER...

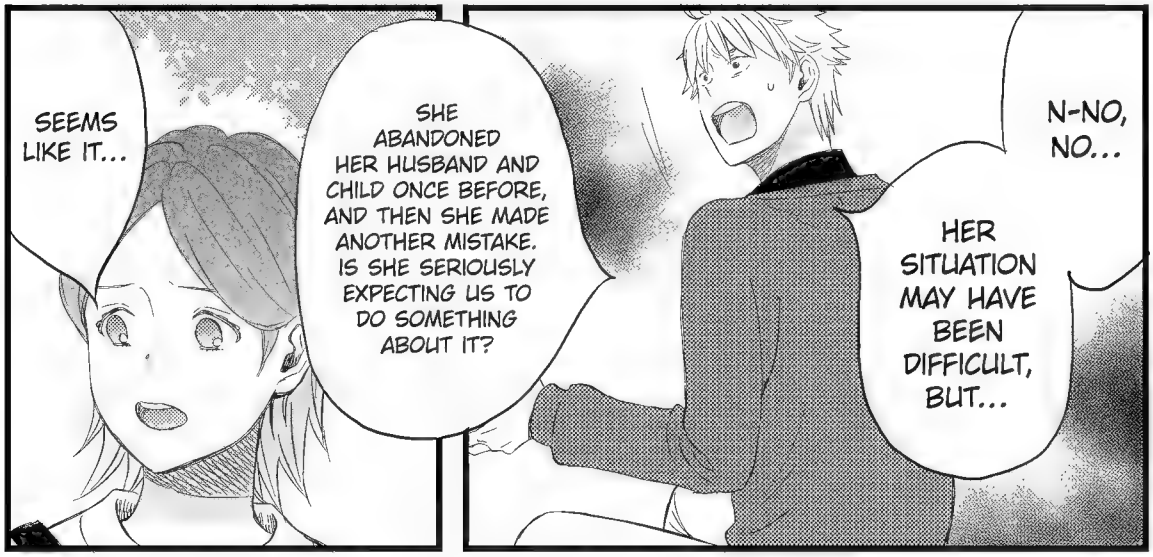

I DON'T THINK A STALKER SHOULD BE CALLING SOMEONE ELSE SUSPICIOUS...
HER BEHAVIOR WAS VERY SUSPICIOUS...
AT FIRST, I THOUGHT I'D SIMPLY IGNORE HER AS IT HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH ISHIMURA-SAMA. BUT...

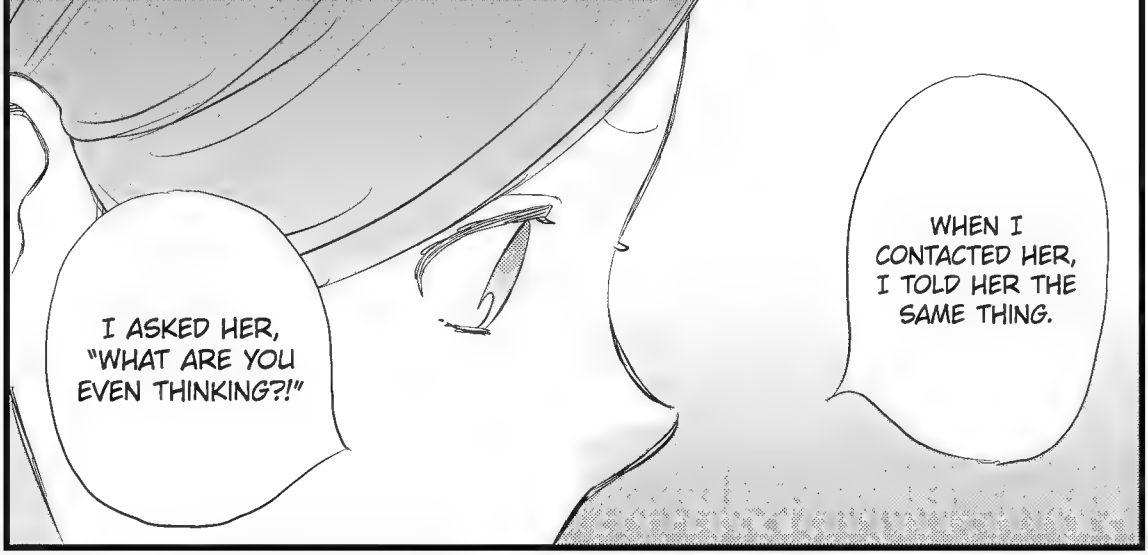
WHAT ...?

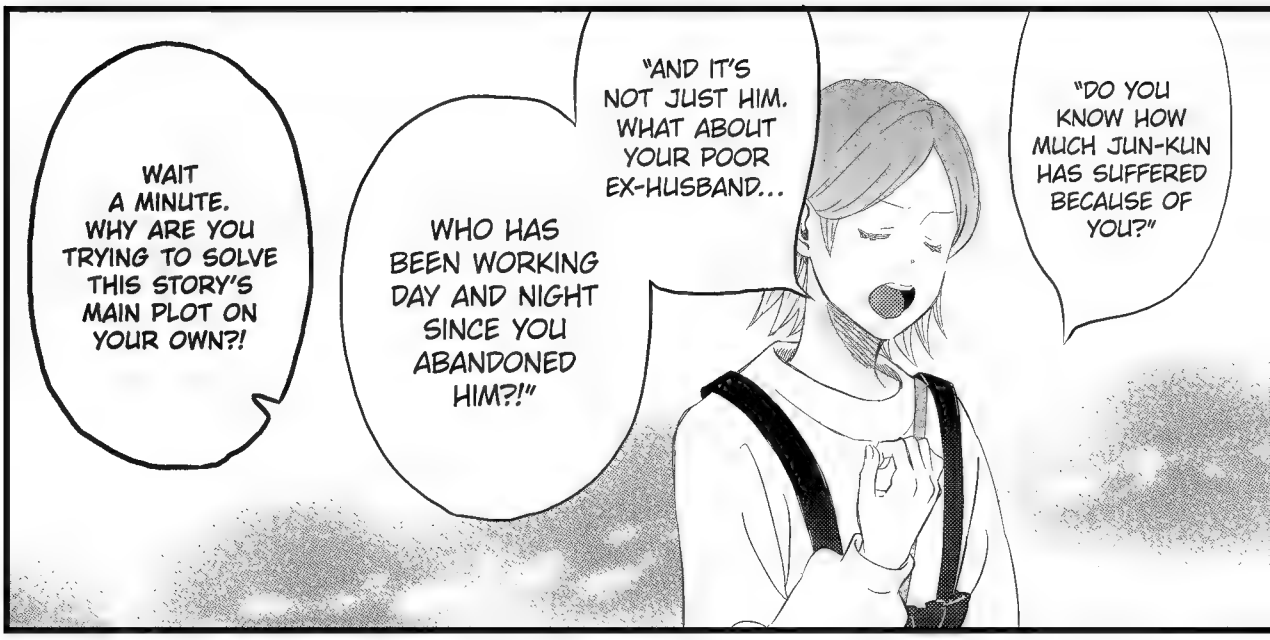
AND AS A RESULT OF PRESSING CIRCUMSTANCES, SHE IS NOW LIVING IN POVERTY.


WHAAAT...?
A LOT HAPPENED... AND IT SEEMS NO ONE EVEN KNOWS WHO THAT BABY'S REAL FATHER IS.
SHE MUST HAVE GOTTEN INVOLVED WITH A BAD MAN...

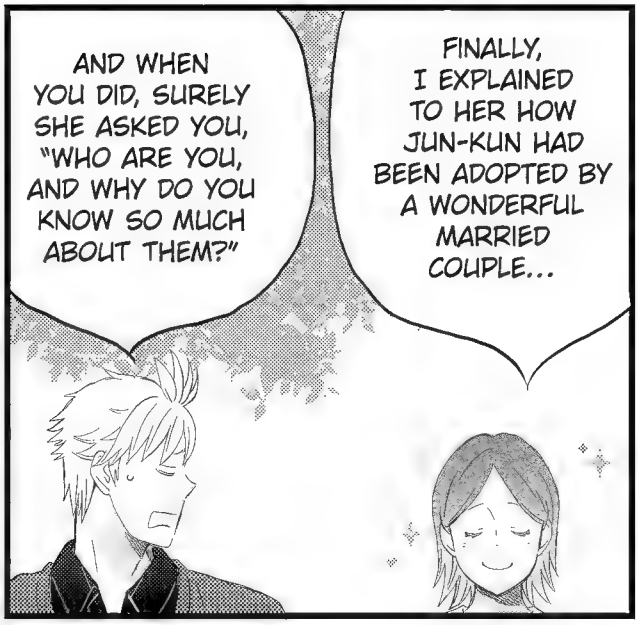

...IT LOOKS LIKE SHE WANTED YOUR HELP.
BUT THEN SHE FOUND OUT ABOUT JUN-KUN'S NEW HOME...
EVEN IF SHE WANTED TO RUN AWAY FROM THAT MAN, IT WAS DIFFICULT WITH A BABY TO CARE FOR.


SEEMS LIKE IT...
SHE ABANDONED HER HUSBAND AND CHILD ONCE BEFORE, AND THEN SHE MADE ANOTHER MISTAKE. IS SHE SERIOUSLY EXPECTING US TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT?
N-NO, NO...
HER SITUATION MAY HAVE BEEN DIFFICULT, BUT...


WHEN I CONTACTED HER, I TOLD HER THE SAME THING.
I ASKED HER, "WHAT ARE YOU EVEN THINKING?!"

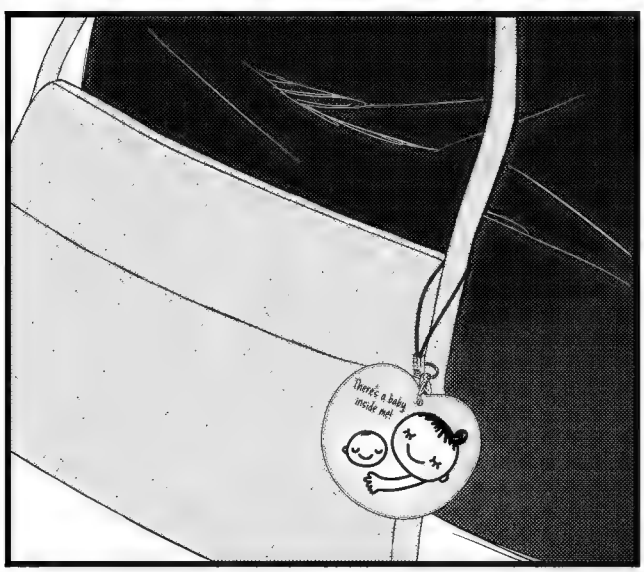

"DO YOU KNOW HOW MUCH JUN-KUN HAS SUFFERED BECAUSE OF YOU?"
"AND IT'S NOT JUST HIM. WHAT ABOUT YOUR POOR EX-HUSBAND...
WHO HAS BEEN WORKING DAY AND NIGHT SINCE YOU ABANDONED HIM?!"
WAIT A MINUTE. WHY ARE YOU TRYING TO SOLVE THIS STORY'S MAIN PLOT ON YOUR OWN?!

THIS STALKER, WHO ISN'T EVEN A REGULARLY APPEARING SIDE CHARACTER, IS ACTUALLY DRIVING SUCH AN IMPORTANT PLOTLINE FORWARD...
KAMIYA-SAN, DIDN'T YOU QUIT YOUR JOB BECAUSE YOU WERE GETTING MARRIED?

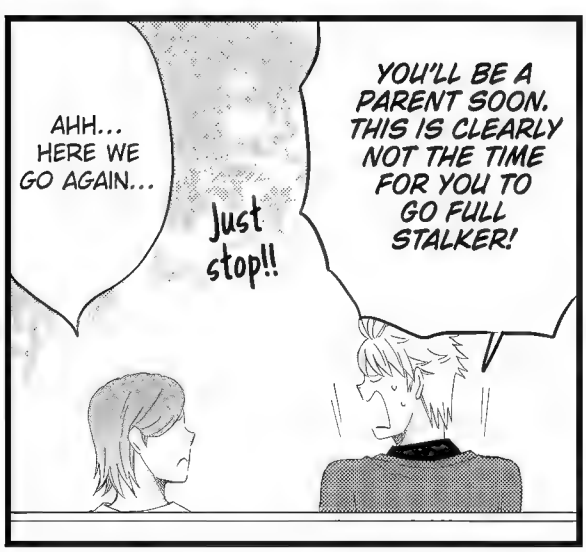

FINALLY, I EXPLAINED TO HER HOW JUN-KUN HAD BEEN ADOPTED BY A WONDERFUL MARRIED COUPLE...
AND WHEN YOU DID, SURELY SHE ASKED YOU, "WHO ARE YOU, AND WHY DO YOU KNOW SO MUCH ABOUT THEM?"

THE HOSPITAL? ARE YOU SICK?
I'M GOING TO THE HOSPITAL ON A REGULAR BASIS AND WILL CONTINUE TO DO SO FOR A WHILE, SO I'M ACTUALLY NOT THAT FREE.
NO. IT'S NOT BECAUSE I'M SICK...

WHY NOT SPEND IT ON SOMETHING OTHER THAN STALKING? YOU COULD TAKE CLASSES AND LEARN A SKILL OR SOMETHING.
YOU SEEM TO HAVE A LOT OF FREE TIME ON YOUR HANDS.
...

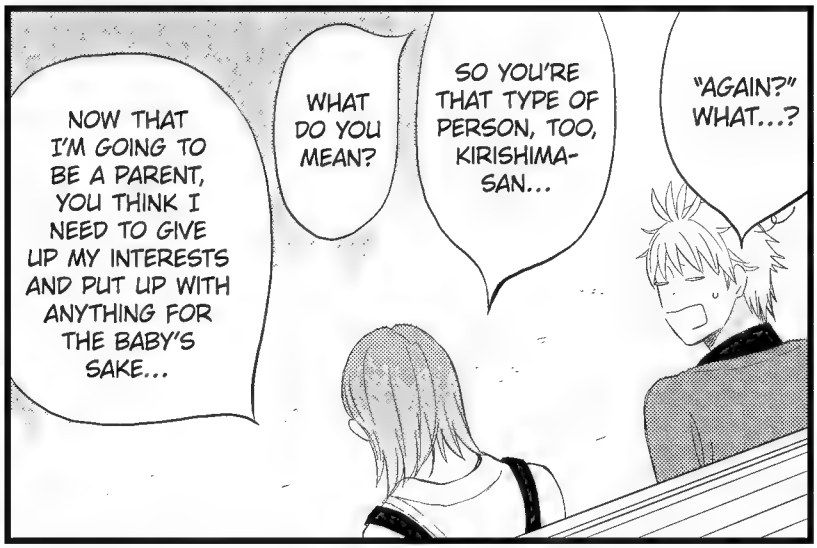

There's a baby inside me!

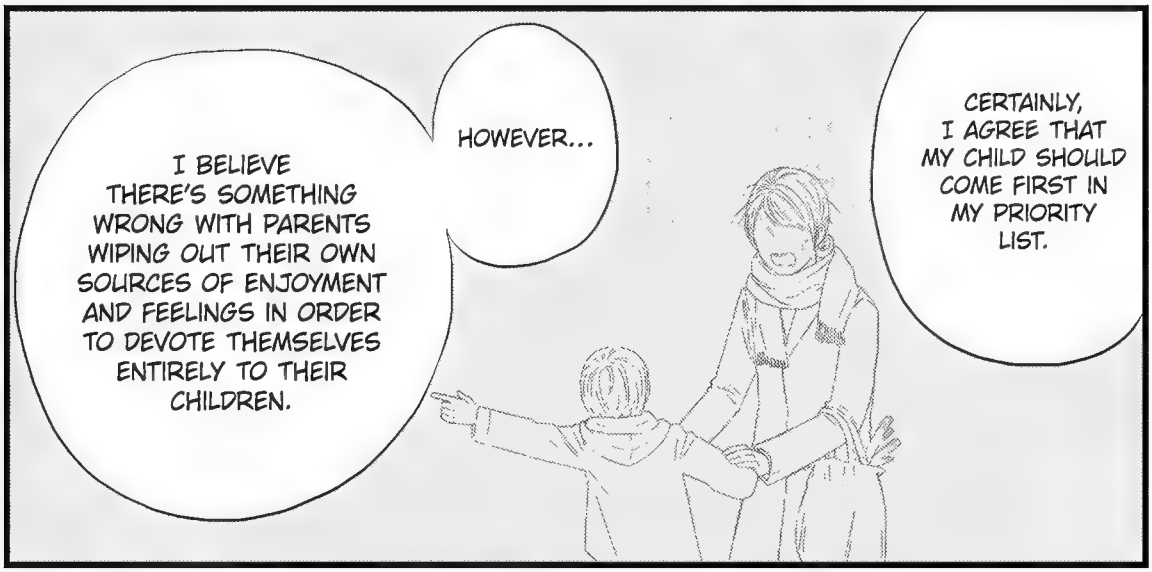
...!
Ah!


AHH... HERE WE GO AGAIN...
Just stop!!
YOU'LL BE A PARENT SOON. THIS IS CLEARLY NOT THE TIME FOR YOU TO GO FULL STALKER!

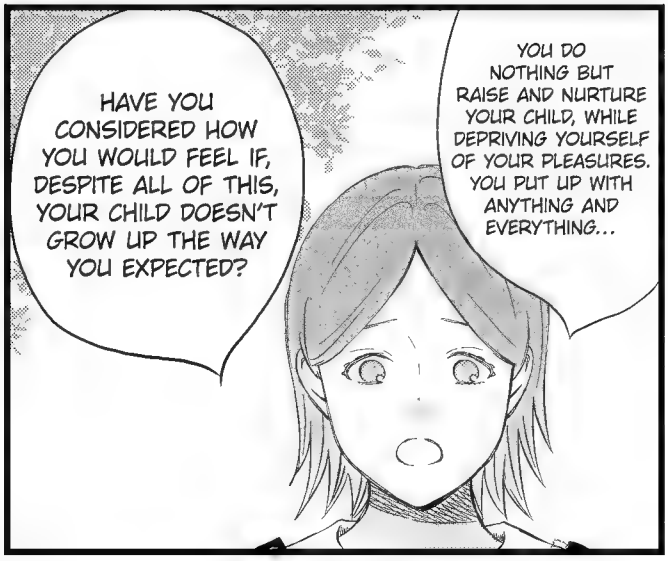
WHY IS A PREGNANT WOMAN STALKING PEOPLE?!
I'M PREGNANT ...

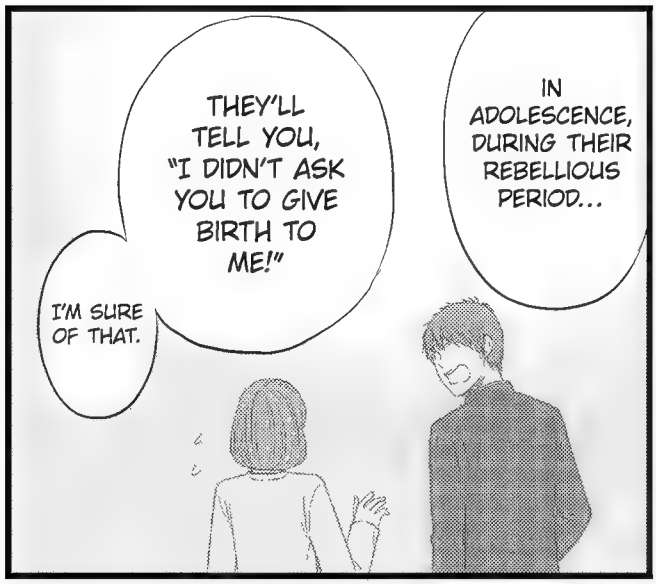
WELL, I THINK THAT'S WRONG.

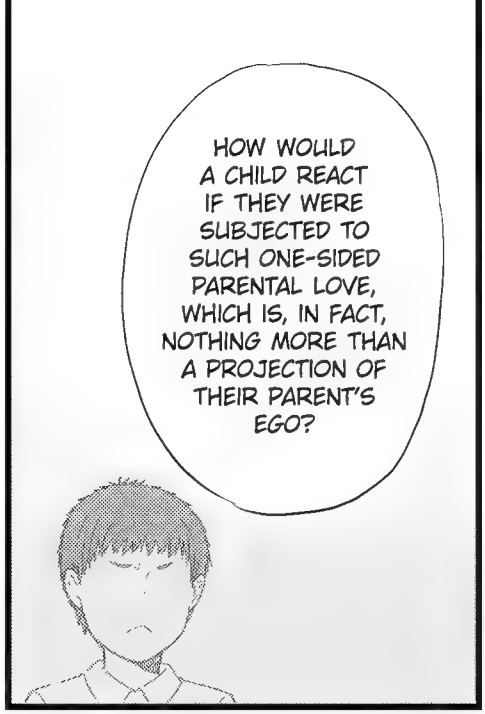

NOW THAT I'M GOING TO BE A PARENT, YOU THINK I NEED TO GIVE UP MY INTERESTS AND PUT UP WITH ANYTHING FOR THE BABY'S SAKE...
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
SO YOU'RE THAT TYPE OF PERSON, TOO, KIRISHIMA-SAN...
"AGAIN?" WHAT...?

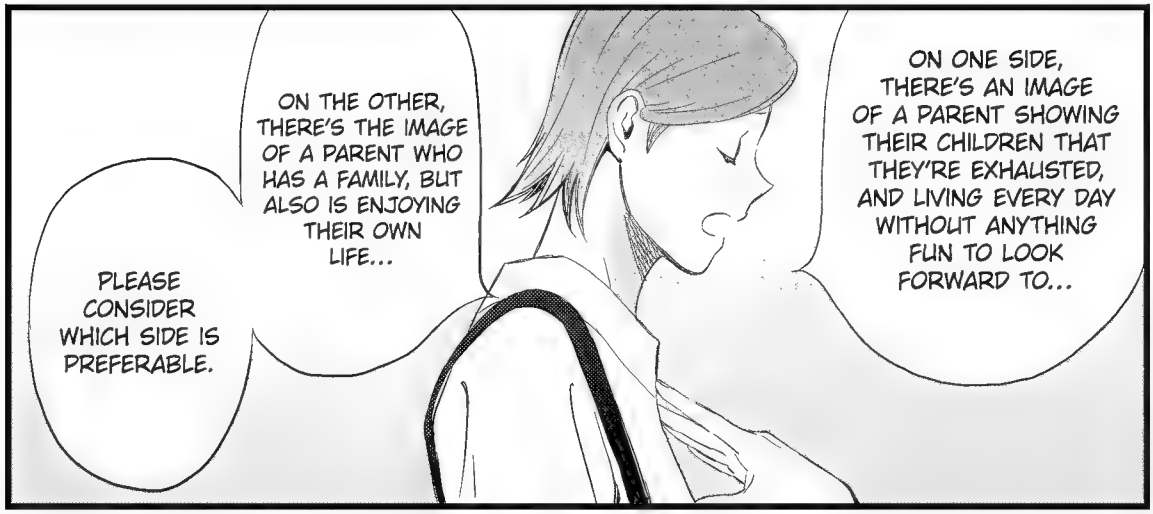

I BELIEVE THERE'S SOMETHING WRONG WITH PARENTS WIPING OUT THEIR OWN SOURCES OF ENJOYMENT AND FEELINGS IN ORDER TO DEVOTE THEMSELVES ENTIRELY TO THEIR CHILDREN.
HOWEVER...
CERTAINLY, I AGREE THAT MY CHILD SHOULD COME FIRST IN MY PRIORITY LIST.

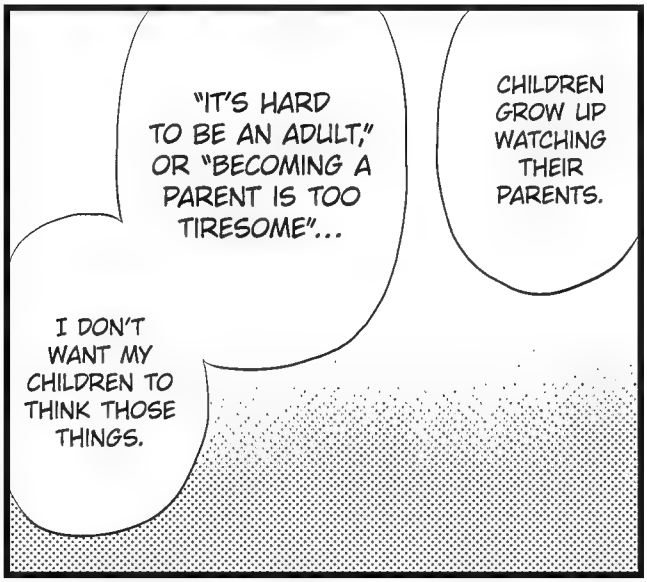
AFTER ALL THE SACRIFICES AND PATIENCE YOU'VE PUT INTO RAISING THEM...
WOULDN'T YOU REGRET IT DEEPLY?

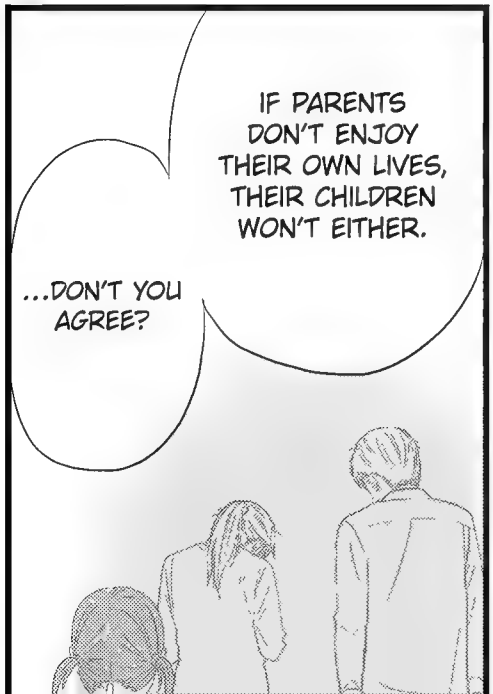

HAVE YOU CONSIDERED HOW YOU WOULD FEEL IF, DESPITE ALL OF THIS, YOUR CHILD DOESN'T GROW UP THE WAY YOU EXPECTED?
YOU DO NOTHING BUT RAISE AND NURTURE YOUR CHILD, WHILE DEPRIVING YOURSELF OF YOUR PLEASURES. YOU PUT UP WITH ANYTHING AND EVERYTHING...

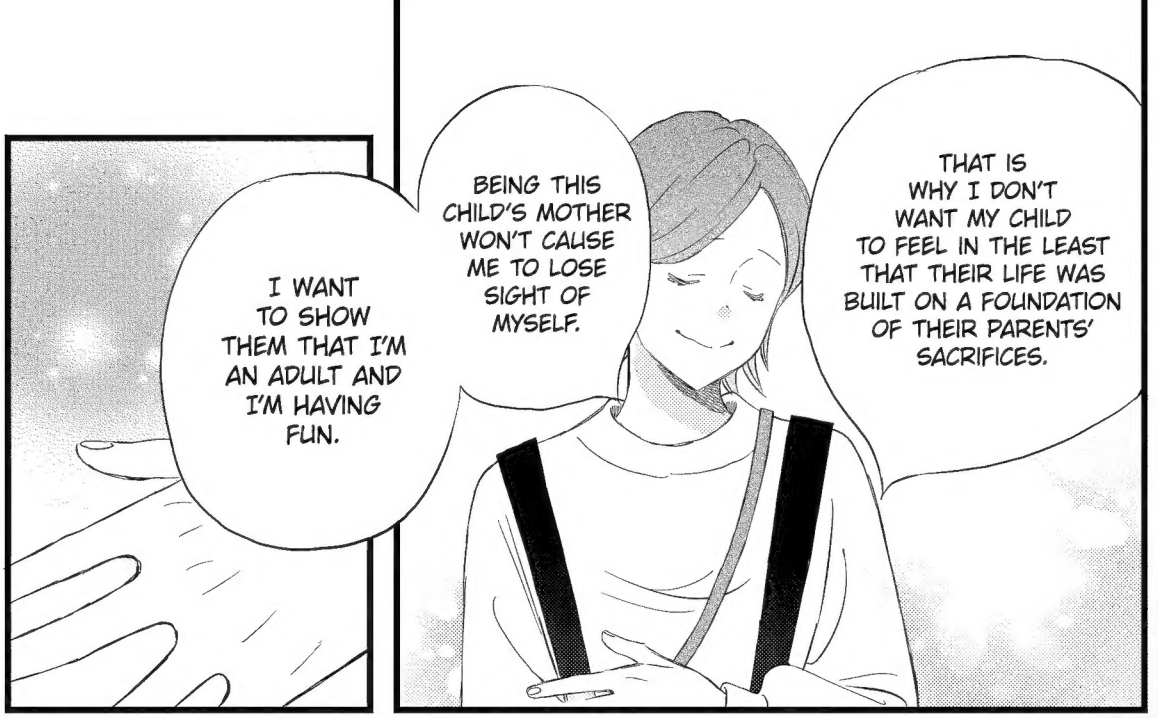

IN ADOLESCENCE, DURING THEIR REBELLIOUS PERIOD...
THEY'LL TELL YOU, "I DIDN'T ASK YOU TO GIVE BIRTH TO ME!"
I'M SURE OF THAT.

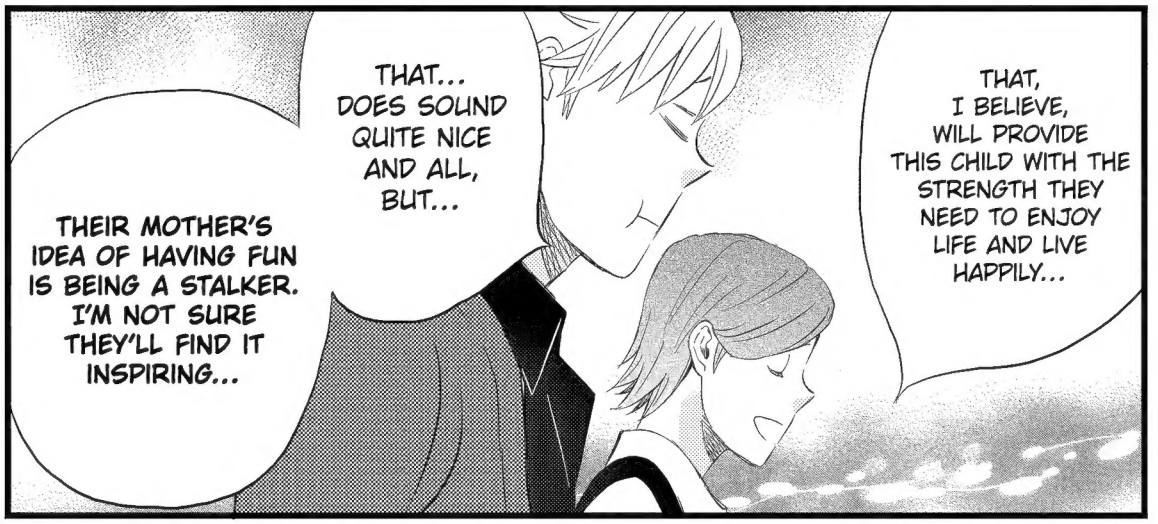

HOW WOULD A CHILD REACT IF THEY WERE SUBJECTED TO SUCH ONE-SIDED PARENTAL LOVE, WHICH IS, IN FACT, NOTHING MORE THAN A PROJECTION OF THEIR PARENT'S EGO?


ON ONE SIDE, THERE'S AN IMAGE OF A PARENT SHOWING THEIR CHILDREN THAT THEY'RE EXHAUSTED, AND LIVING EVERY DAY WITHOUT ANYTHING FUN TO LOOK FORWARD TO...
ON THE OTHER, THERE'S THE IMAGE OF A PARENT WHO HAS A FAMILY, BUT ALSO IS ENJOYING THEIR OWN LIFE...
PLEASE CONSIDER WHICH SIDE IS PREFERABLE.

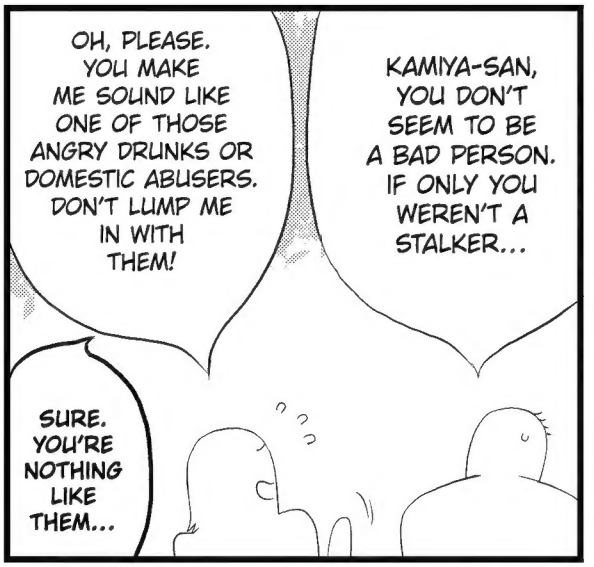

CHILDREN GROW UP WATCHING THEIR PARENTS.
"IT'S HARD TO BE AN ADULT," OR "BECOMING A PARENT IS TOO TIRESOME"...
I DON'T WANT MY CHILDREN TO THINK THOSE THINGS.


IF PARENTS DON'T ENJOY THEIR OWN LIVES, THEIR CHILDREN WON'T EITHER.
...DON'T YOU AGREE?

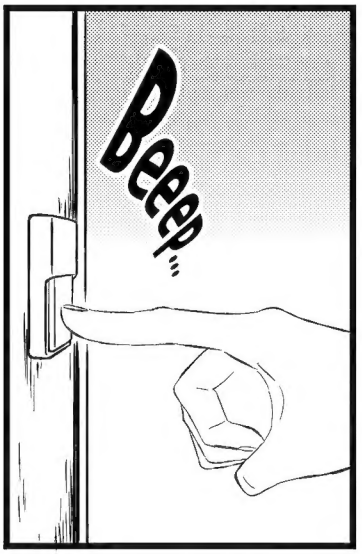

I WANT TO SHOW THEM THAT I'M AN ADULT AND I'M HAVING FUN.
BEING THIS CHILD'S MOTHER WON'T CAUSE ME TO LOSE SIGHT OF MYSELF.
THAT IS WHY I DON'T WANT MY CHILD TO FEEL IN THE LEAST THAT THEIR LIFE WAS BUILT ON A FOUNDATION OF THEIR PARENTS' SACRIFICES.

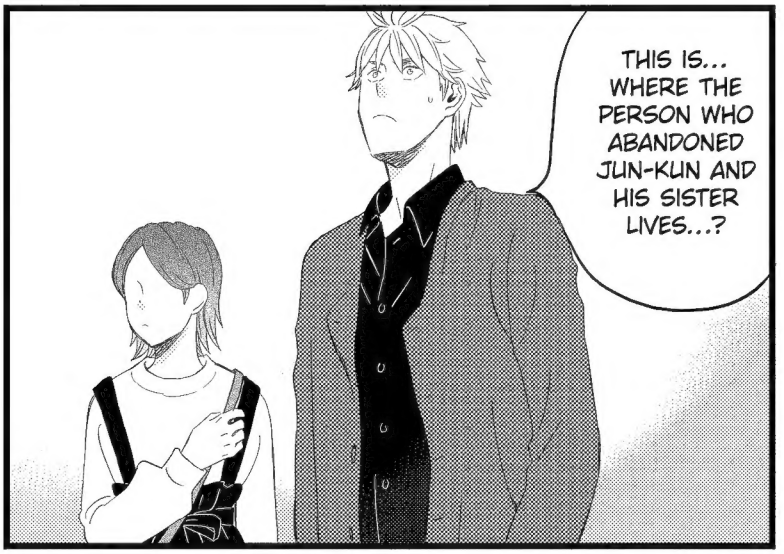

THEIR MOTHER'S IDEA OF HAVING FUN IS BEING A STALKER. I'M NOT SURE THEY'LL FIND IT INSPIRING...
THAT... DOES SOUND QUITE NICE AND ALL, BUT...
THAT, I BELIEVE, WILL PROVIDE THIS CHILD WITH THE STRENGTH THEY NEED TO ENJOY LIFE AND LIVE HAPPILY...

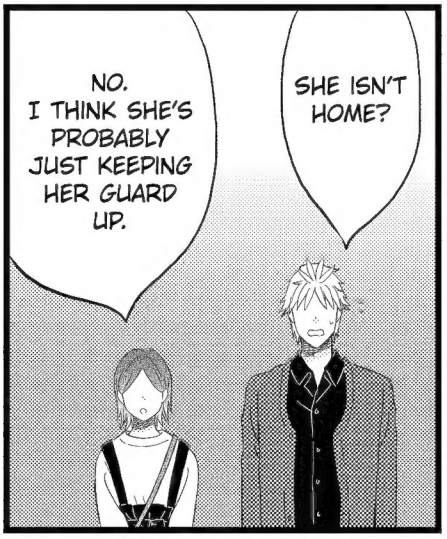
SO I'M THINKING OF PAYING THAT PERSON A VISIT RIGHT NOW.
...ANYWAY, I DIDN'T KNOW SHE HAD ACTUALLY DECIDED TO ABANDON HER CHILD.

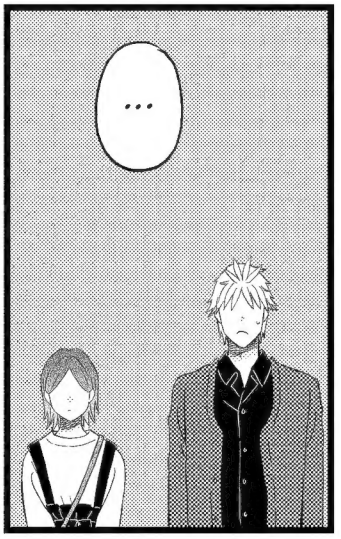

SURE. YOU'RE NOTHING LIKE THEM...
OH, PLEASE. YOU MAKE ME SOUND LIKE ONE OF THOSE ANGRY DRUNKS OR DOMESTIC ABUSERS. DON'T LUMP ME IN WITH THEM!
KAMIYA-SAN, YOU DON'T SEEM TO BE A BAD PERSON. IF ONLY YOU WEREN'T A STALKER...

DON'T YOU WANT TO COME WITH ME?
AS I SAID... WHY ARE YOU THE ONE TRYING TO SOLVE THIS STORY'S MAIN PLOT?!
Of course I'm going!


Beep...

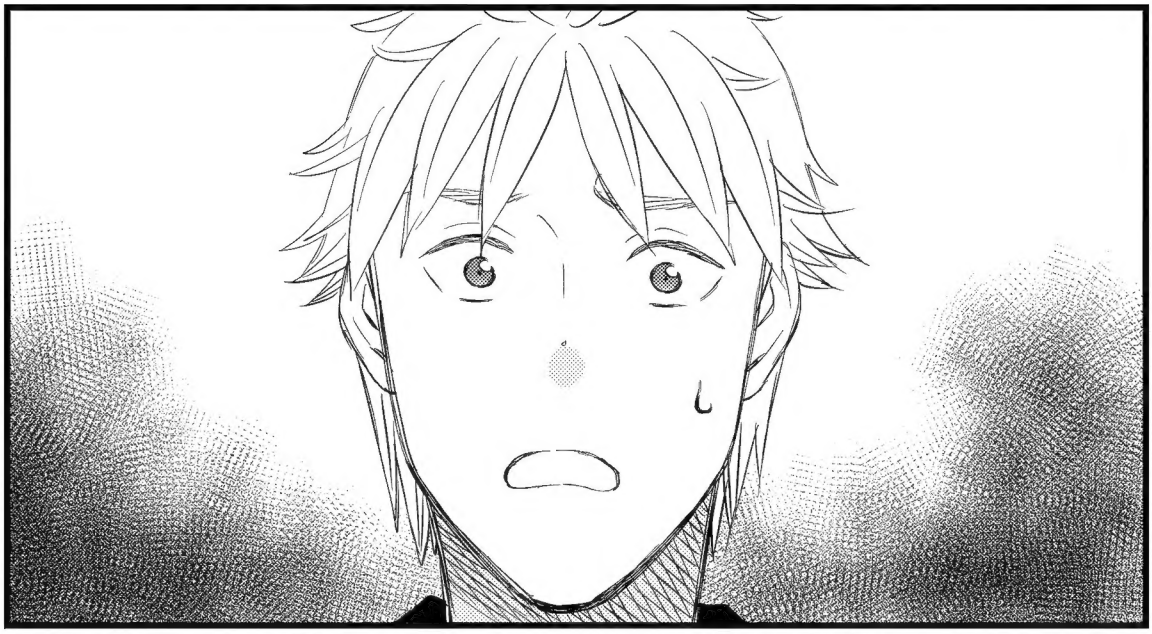

THIS IS... WHERE THE PERSON WHO ABANDONED JUN-KUN AND HIS SISTER LIVES...?


SHE ISN'T HOME?
NO. I THINK SHE'S PROBABLY JUST KEEPING HER GUARD UP.


...

SILENCE...

YES...?
Ker-chak



YOU'RE JUN-KUN'S MOTHER... AREN'T YOU?